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REMARKS

OF

HON. JOHN B. WELLER, OF CALIFORNIA,

ON

NICARAGUAN AFFAIRS,

DELIVERED

IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE, MAY 1 AND 15, 1856.

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## NICARAGUAN AFFAIRS.

• IN THE SENATE, May 1, 1856.

Mr. WELLER. I ask leave to submit the following resolution:

*Resolved*, That the President of the United States be requested, if not incompatible with the public interest, to communicate to the Senate copies of all correspondence between this Government and our Minister at Nicaragua not heretofore communicated.

I desire to remark, Mr. President, that I am in receipt of many letters from persons residing on the Pacific coast who are anxious to know whether I have been sustaining the Administration in the policy adopted in regard to the Nicaraguan Government. I speak of that Government which is now in existence. I desire to take this occasion, here in my place, to say that I have no information on this subject other than that which is published in the newspapers of the day; and, upon the facts thus presented, I have no hesitation in saying that I do not approve of the course which has been pursued. If, when Colonel French came here and applied for the recognition of the new Government, there was proof to sustain the charges alleged against him in the public press impeaching his integrity as a man, the Administration was justifiable in rejecting him; but it ought to have been placed on personal grounds. Our Minister in Nicaragua should have been instructed at once to say to that Government, "If you will send some other person to whom there are no personal objections he will be received." Whether this has been done or not I do not know; but I presume it has not.

Our usual practice has been, so soon as any of the South or Central American States have revolutionized and given evidence of their stability or of their power and capacity to maintain the new Government which they have thus constituted, to recognize them. I need not say that this course is peculiarly proper in regard to Central America. These States are often convulsed by civil wars; and revolution succeeds revolution in such rapid succession, that any other course would be found impracticable. The route from here to our Pacific possessions was through Central America, and this alone would compel us to suspend communication with that coast, or recognize at once the existing Government. We have now to pass through Nicaragua or Panama to reach the State from whence I come. Although it might be against the true interests of this Government to acquire or annex Central America at present, yet we are interested, and deeply interested, in having a stable and fixed Government on that part of the continent. You will have no stability in any of the Central American States until you have infused a

large amount of North American blood into their veins. The true policy, then, would have been to encourage rather than discourage emigration to Nicaragua. I do not ask that your neutrality laws or treaties should be violated. These I would have at all times maintained in good faith; but I do not approve the means which have been adopted to prevent our countrymen from emigrating to that country. The proceedings in New York to arrest persons going to San Juan del Norte were, in my opinion, not only unnecessary, but wholly unjustifiable—proceedings which neither existing laws, public treaties, nor good faith required, and which sound policy forbids. However devoted I may be to the principles which have generally governed the present Administration, it is due to my own honor to declare that these acts to which I have alluded do not receive my sanction.

A state of war is now existing between Costa Rica and Nicaragua. The army of the former has invaded the territory of the latter, although no war has been declared. Because North Americans aided in bringing the present Government into power, and because an American is at the head of the army, and some of his countrymen enlisted under his banner, Costa Rica only declares war against them. The people of Nicaragua are now united, and their dissensions no longer exist. They have a President, a native of their own country, selected by them, at the head of the Government. Some of these North Americans are now in her army, and General Walker is the commander-in-chief. Is Costa Rica to proscribe Americans from entering into the service of other States? Is she to dictate the birth-place of the man who shall be placed at the head of her army? I have in my hands a decree, or proclamation, issued by the general commanding the invading force from Costa Rica, to which I invite the attention of the Senate:

JOHN R. MORA, *President of the Republic of Costa Rica,*  
*General-in-Chief of the Army of Nicaragua:*

All the filibusters taken with arms in hand will be subject to all the rigor of the law, which is death; but all the filibusters who have not used their arms against this Republic, and give up, out of free will, their arms and persons to officers of the Costa Rica army, shall be pardoned.

JOHN R. MORA.

RAFAEL S. ESCALANTE,

*Sub. Secretary of the Department of War.*

I passed through that country for the third time in 1834; a civil war was then raging. A part of the Nicaraguans, by many supposed to be a majority, were arrayed against the existing Government. The "Democratic party," so called, avowed liberal principles, and wanted a Government similar in its constitution and laws to ours.

Proclamations signed by their leader were posted along the San Juan river and on Virgin Bay, inviting North Americans to join his standard. Under these invitations General Walker and others residing on the Pacific went there and ventured their destinies with the revolutionary party. They succeeded; the old Government was destroyed, and a new and far more liberal one established. The Government at once offered large grants of lands, &c., to induce our people to emigrate. Costa Rica now wages a war of extermination against these countrymen of ours. Her chief declares they shall be shot if they are taken prisoners, and some of them have already been executed. Are we to stand still and see our people denied the rights of prisoners of war, and shot down by a brutal soldiery? Is not this such a violation of the law of nations as to demand immediate redress?

I intimated some time since that on a suitable occasion I would reply to the charges made in the Senate against General Walker. The protracted illness of the Senator from Delaware [Mr. CLAYTON] has prevented me from doing so; and I only propose now to say a few words by way of prefacing a letter received this morning. It is from General Walker. It presents some facts and some points which ought to attract the attention of the Senate. But you must allow me to say before I read, that there is no man whose character has been more shamefully misrepresented in this country than General Walker. I have known him for several years on the Pacific coast as a quiet, unobtrusive, and intelligent gentleman of uncommon energy and decided character. His integrity—his honor was never impeached in any quarter. After being invited, he went to Nicaragua, not as a "freebooter;" he did not go there for plunder. He neither coveted their lands nor their money, for no one has less of the sordid feeling than General Walker. He was actuated by a high and honorable ambition—a patriotic desire to aid in establishing free institutions in Nicaragua, and ultimately confederate, in a peaceable manner, the Central American States into one great republic. This was his ambition—this the object which he sought to accomplish. Many gentlemen of the highest character residing on the Pacific, actuated by the same motives, rallied under his banner. It is a great mistake to suppose that these men are desperadoes and freebooters!

But, sir, I will read the letter:

GRANADA, April 15, 1856.

MY DEAR SIR: By the last papers from New York, I learn that, when I was denounced in the Senate for the conduct Nicaragua has pursued towards the Transit Company, you were so generous as to undertake to defend me from the aspersions of men utterly ignorant of my character. In consequence of this, I take the liberty of writing some facts in relation to affairs here: and these facts will, I think, prove not unimportant to the Government of the United States.

You have doubtless learned, from the newspapers, how pacific was the policy Nicaragua proposed to pursue towards the other States of Central America. Notwithstanding all our overtures of peace, the neighboring Governments showed themselves, if not positively, at least negatively, hostile to the actual administration of Nicaragua. It was constantly asserted, not only here, but throughout Central America, that the States were stimulated to this conduct by English and French agents. But it was not until the correspondence of the Consul General of Costa Rica in London was intercepted by me a few weeks ago, that positive evidence was afforded of the active sympathy the British Government manifests for those who oppose the Americans in Nicaragua. The correspondence shows that England is furnishing arms to our enemies; and, at the

same time, the whole British West India squadron is sent to San Juan del Norte, in order that the moral weight of the English Government may be thrown into the scale against our Republic. I do not know how these facts may appear to people of the United States, but to me they seem directly at variance with American principles and American interests.

These facts are patent to all, and their signification is apparent to the most superficial observer. There are other circumstances connected with the present war waging in this State and in Costa Rica, which may require interpretation in order to make their importance felt.

The Government of Costa Rica has never yet declared war against the Government of Nicaragua, yet it has invaded our territories, and has murdered American citizens who have never forfeited the protection of the United States Government. This has been done under cover of a decree issued by the President of Costa Rica, declaring war against the American forces in the service of Nicaragua. To declare war against the Americans in the service of Nicaragua, and not against Nicaragua herself, is to deny in the most positive and offensive manner the right of Americans to engage in the service of a foreign State. Not only has the declaration of war been made in this offensive and unheard-of manner, but another decree has been published ordering all American prisoners of war, taken by the Costa Rica forces, to be shot. This is to deny to Americans engaged in a foreign service the common rights to which soldiers are entitled by the laws of war. Such decrees as those I have mentioned not only throw Costa Rica, as I conceive, beyond the pale of civilized nations, but they directly affect the honor and dignity of the United States. They attempt to control the American people, and keep them within a limit which the American Government has never prescribed. Costa Rica says Americans shall not emigrate to Nicaragua and take arms in her service. It remains to be seen whether she can sustain herself in so singular a position.

In such a war as the one they are now waging against us there can be but one result. They may destroy my whole force—a circumstance I deem almost impossible—they may kill every American now in Nicaragua—but the seed is sown, and not all the force of Spanish America can prevent the fruit from coming to maturity. The more savage the nature of the war they wage against us, the more certain the result, the more terrible the consequences. I may not live to see the end, but I feel that my countrymen will not permit the result to be doubtful. I know that the honor and the interests of the great country which, despite of the foreign service I am engaged in, I still love to call my own, are involved in the present struggle. That honor must be preserved inviolate, and those interests must be jealously maintained.

So far, we have had great moral odds against us. The Government to which we looked for aid and comfort has treated us with coldness and disdain. There has been no Government to encourage us, and bid us "God speed!" Nothing but our own sense of the justice of the cause we are engaged in, and of its importance to the country of our birth, has enabled us to struggle on as far as we have come. We may perish in the work we have undertaken, and our cause may be, for a time, lost; but if we fall, we feel that it is in the path of honor; and what is life, or what is success, in comparison with the consciousness of having performed a duty, and of having cooperated, no matter how slightly, in the cause of improvement and progress? I begin, however, to digress, and therefore conclude.

I remain, with high regard, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM WALKER.

Hon. JOHN B. WELLER, *United States Senate.*

Mr. CASS. What is the date of that letter?

Mr. WELLER. April the 15th, the day before the battle. So you will discover that the British Government has given orders to furnish the Costa Ricans with arms to expel North Americans from Nicaragua! And the Clayton and Bulwer treaty is still in force!

Mr. President, the Government of Nicaragua ought to have been recognized long since. The weight of our Government ought not to have been thrown against the party now in power. They have for some six months past given satisfactory evidence of their ability to maintain a Government. If our countrymen desire to unite their destinies with Nicaragua, let them go without being dogged around your wharves by police offi-

cers. These are my opinions, and I frankly avow them.

Let me say, before I dismiss this subject, that the interference of the British Government in this contest may induce Guatemala and San Salvador to form an alliance with Costa Rica, and assist in the effort which is now being made to drive North Americans from Nicaragua; but if General Walker can obtain sufficient supplies for his army in the way of food and clothing, the whole Spanish race in Central America cannot expel him. Notwithstanding they are poorly provided and worse paid, no troops ever had more confidence in their leader, and in their cause. Although the odds are against him, I still think he will be successful. If he fails, it will be because of the aid and comfort given to his enemies by British agents and emissaries.

We have difficulties, too, on the other route. Thirty Americans have been slaughtered at Panama. As the very best feeling has always existed between the Government of New Granada and the United States, I have no doubt the full power of that Government will be immediately used for the purpose of redressing these injuries. And I have a right to believe that those in power here will see that that Government makes ample reparation for the outrages which have been committed. It was one of those violent outbreaks which occasionally happen when strangers and people of different nations and tongues are thrown together. The local authorities were too weak to control the movements of the excited populace. Steps will be taken, as I am assured, on the part of this Government, to prevent a recurrence of such outrages. Reparation for property destroyed must be made, and the amplest security given for the future. The line of communication which has thus been interrupted through Panama will soon recover from the shock it has sustained. As this is the route over which our mails are transported, I expect to see prompt action on the part of our Government. Besides, we carry over this Isthmus some \$4,500,000 of gold dust every month, the non-arrival of which in New York at the proper time would inflict great loss upon our banks and merchants. I hope Senators will see in our present position the necessity for constructing at once a safe and convenient road through our own territories. But I will not trespass further upon the courtesy of the Senate.

#### IN THE SENATE, May 15, 1856,

On the message from the President of the United States in reply to a resolution of the Senate of the 24th of March, and a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 8th of May, having reference to the routes of transit between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, through the Republics of Nicaragua and New Granada, and to the condition of affairs in Central America.

Mr. WELLER said: Mr. President, I come from that section of the Union most deeply interested in keeping open the route through Central America. To my constituents it is eminently a practical question, and this must be my apology for intruding, for a few moments, upon the attention of the Senate.

I regret very much that the Senator from Kentucky, [Mr. CRITTENDEN,] to-day, has not only mistaken the question presented in the message,

but placed many gentlemen, with whom in past years I have been upon terms of intimacy, and for whom I cherish feelings of friendship and respect, in a false position. If he will take the trouble to investigate the facts as they really exist, I think he will become perfectly satisfied that he is wrong in applying the epithets which he has applied to those Americans who were connected with General Walker in the late revolution in Nicaragua. Few questions have been more grossly misrepresented by the public press than that revolution. What are the facts?

Early in the year 1854 there was a contest between Chamorro and Castillon, rival candidates for the presidency of that Republic. The former was in command of the Army, and through this influence secured a majority of votes in his favor, and was inaugurated. Chamorro was an old Spaniard, with all the prejudices of his race against a government based upon public opinion. In other words, he regarded physical force indispensable in the government of man—that nothing short of absolute power in the hands of the Chief Magistrate could give stability to a government. He was, in all his notions, opinions, and sympathies, a despot. Castillon, who was also a Spaniard, was a well educated gentleman, and had passed much of his time upon the continent of Europe and in the United States. He had become liberalized in his principles, and had formed a high admiration of the institutions of this country. It was his most earnest desire to see established in Nicaragua a constitution and laws similar to those which have secured prosperity and happiness to us. In this contest, as I have said before, he was beaten. One of the first acts of Chamorro was to expel Castillon and his adherents from the territory of Nicaragua. They took refuge in Honduras.

In a few months, ascertaining that the people of Nicaragua were so much enraged at the tyranny and despotic rule of Chamorro, that they were ripe for revolution, he placed himself at the head of some thirty-six men, and, relying upon the affection of the people for him, landed at Rivas. The result proved that the confidence which he reposed in the people was not misplaced. A large portion of the Government troops, as well as the people, hailed his arrival with great enthusiasm. Being sufficiently reinforced, he advanced at once upon Leon, where a battle was fought, in which his troops were victorious, and Chamorro was driven back to the city of Granada, a strongly fortified town. Castillon pursued him and took a position outside, where he remained for several months. In the mean time, a provisional Government was organized at Leon. Gentlemen of both fortune and ability were placed at its head. This was called the *Liberal or Democratic Government*. Under these circumstances the most liberal offers of lands, &c., were (by proclamations) made to North Americans who would come and assist in maintaining that Government.

I passed through that country twice whilst those two Governments were in existence. I saw, myself, handbills posted up along the route at different points between San Juan del Norte and San Juan del Sud, inviting our countrymen to join the Democratic party, and assist him (Castillon) in overthrowing the despotism established by Chamorro. He signed himself the "*DEMOCRATIC LEADER OF NICARAGUA*." Many of our citizens,

passing along the route, joined his forces. An invitation, directly from that Government, was sent to General Walker, offering him a large grant of land, if he would raise a military force and aid in this work, the overthrow of tyranny and the regeneration of Nicaragua. The invitation was accepted; and General Walker landed at Rivas with fifty-six men. He was soon, however, joined by some three hundred Americans from California. Very few weeks elapsed after this time before the old Government was entirely overthrown. In the meanwhile the two most prominent actors in this revolution died—Chimorro, of consumption, at Granada, and Castillon, of the cholera, at Leon, I believe. General Walker was at once placed at the head of the army. Rivas, a native of Nicaragua, and a gentleman of education, distinguished for his liberal ideas, and having no prejudices against our people, was made provisional President. A regular government was at once established, with all the machinery necessary to give security to person and property. Civil war ceased to exist, and all dissensions were hushed into silence.

The people, discovering that under the new Government their rights and persons would be protected, gave in their adhesion, and not a murmur was heard. The Government, thus constituted, has been in existence for more than six months, and I affirm that during that period Nicaragua has been less disturbed by civil dissensions than during the same length of time since the separation from Mexico in 1823-'24. You have no testimony, of any character, that there is a party now in Nicaragua that desires to disturb or overthrow the existing Government. I have no knowledge of any attempt being made to do so. There certainly is no other Government in that State, nor is there any contest as to who shall control its administration. Now, after the lapse of six months, the question arises, whether we are authorized to receive a minister from that Government? Under our Constitution, the power to receive ministers is vested exclusively in the President, and in the exercise of this power he has received a minister, properly accredited, and for this he is denounced.

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. CRITTENDEN] confounds this question with that of recognizing the independence of a colony which has revolted from the mother country. This is a simple proposition to receive a minister from a new administration of an *old and long-recognized independent State*. I am sure that my distinguished friend can discriminate between these two cases. The one is a question of great delicacy—requiring much prudence and caution. To recognize the independence of a State, whilst we are upon terms of amity with the Government from which it has revolted, and before that Government has ceased all efforts to subdue it, is, as I have said before, an exceedingly delicate question. The message of General Jackson, to which he alludes, lays down the principle which ought to govern us in cases of this kind. I undertake to affirm that there is not a single sentiment in the message, which has just been read, that contradicts in the slightest particular the message of General Jackson. I examined that document but the other day, and I challenge the Senator to show in what respect its principles have been violated in the paper now before us. I think he will find,

upon examination, that the principles there enunciated had no application whatever to this case.

One might suppose, from the manner in which the Senator has treated this question, that the reception of a minister must necessarily involve us in a war. A war with whom? Whose rights have we trampled upon? What part of the law of nations have we violated? Will the Senator be good enough to inform me? What was the duty of the President under the circumstances? Here comes a minister regularly accredited from a Government which has existed as an independent republic for many years. Was he to reject him, because unfortunately his Government was involved in a war with a neighboring State? Is this any reason why the minister should be rejected? or are we to reject him because the Administration which sent him here came into power through the intervention of physical force? I regret to say, that it is very seldom that changes are effected in the administration of the South American States where physical force is not used. Our disputes are settled at the ballot-box—theirs on the battle-field. The President shows in his message that five distinct Governments in Mexico had been recognized within a few months, and it has been our uniform practice to recognize the *de facto* Government, without stopping to inquire how it came into existence. This policy is more necessary in regard to the Central American States than any other portion of the world, because they lay upon the great highway between the Atlantic and our Pacific possessions. How can you maintain your communication unless you recognize the *de facto* Government? To whom will you apply for redress for outrages committed upon the persons or property of American citizens? That North Americans aided in bringing this Administration into power I do not pretend to deny; but I know of no principle recognized by this Republic which prevents its citizens from taking part in the civil wars which convulse other nations. Would you reject a minister because your countrymen aided in bringing a new Administration into power?

It is very probable that some of our people have taken part in all the revolutions which have divided and distracted the southern portions of this continent. And here let me stop and ask the Senate to look at the character of the war which Costa Rica is now waging against Nicaragua. No war has been formally declared against the State, but Costa Rica, with her army, invades the territory of Nicaragua, bearing aloft a black flag, upon which is inscribed, "DEATH TO ALL AMERICANS." In such a contest you could not expect that the people of this Republic would not become intensely excited, and that their sympathies would not become warmly enlisted in the cause of the new Government. Americans love liberty, and sympathize with those who are struggling for free institutions. Carrying out the declaration emblazoned upon her flag, they have shot down, in cold blood, North Americans who were prisoners of war: they have marched a hostile force to Virgin—taken Americans who were engaged in trade and traffic, wholly unconnected with the Army, and most cruelly murdered them. They have even taken women, tied them to trees, and then deliberately murdered them. And all this because they were born in our territory! Are we to submit to this? Are we so weak that we

cannot punish the murderers of our innocent countrymen? Prisoners of war have been taken out and shot by Costa Ricans. I do not pretend that there is an obligation resting upon us to march an army into Costa Rica, to avenge the outrages committed upon the prisoners who fell into the hands of her army, because they were Americans by birth; but I do say, that the United States are deeply interested in maintaining inviolate the laws of nations. No civilized Government now upon the face of the earth undertakes to shoot down its prisoners of war. This relic of barbarism has long since been abandoned. Under the law of nations, as now recognized throughout Christendom, this brutal and inhuman act of the Costa Rican army was deliberate murder. If Costa Rica, in waging her war against Nicaragua, was to execute all her prisoners, in violation of the law of humanity, as well as of nations, I venture to say that this Government would interpose at once; and in this case, surely, we ought not to refuse, because the murdered prisoners happened to have been once citizens of the United States. We ought to say to Costa Rica, in unmistakable language—*ay, sir, language as loud and significant as the booming of your heaviest artillery, that your prisoners of war, whether born in America or elsewhere, are entitled to all the privileges secured to them by the laws of nations.*

We recognize the right of the American to expatriate himself, to go where he may, assist whom he chooses in overturning existing Governments and establishing new ones; and, so far as we are concerned, it is only our duty to see that they are treated precisely as if they were citizens of other States. The only protection which we can extend to them is that which is given by the law of nations. I have said that our people have a right to expatriate themselves, and to take with them muskets, rifles, or pistols, as they may choose. I know of no law which, justly administered, could subject them to a criminal prosecution.

I said, upon a former occasion, that, in my judgment, it would be impolitic to annex, at present, any of these Central American States. This is a question which, under the "manifest destiny" doctrine, must be settled by our children in a succeeding generation. We are now, however, at this day, most deeply interested in maintaining a fixed and stable Government in that section, and this you can never accomplish until North American energy and enterprise shall have obtained the control, and until the blood of our people shall have been infused into their veins. Then, but not till then, will be developed the immense and inexhaustible resources of that the richest country upon the continent. The agricultural and mineral wealth of Nicaragua, under such influences, would soon make her one of the greatest of the American States. No man could predict her future destiny. So far, then, from attempting to prevent our people from migrating to that country, the true policy of the Government was to encourage it.

I know that it is the duty of the marshal, and other Federal officers of New York, to enforce the neutrality laws, and I know that it is the duty of a grand jury to indict all men who have violated the laws of the country; but I never heard that it was their duty to sneak, under cover of night, along your alleys, or through your rag-shops, to

find out whether some offense had not been committed. Police officers have been stationed upon your wharves to examine every man going on board of the California steamers; to interrogate them; and if they could obtain anything from them indicating an intention to stop in Nicaragua, an affidavit is filed, a warrant is issued, the vessel is stopped, and the passengers delayed. This is bad enough; but it is far worse when you have a police force at the other end of the line in the shape of a *British man-of-war*! The documents on your table will show the protest of Captain Tinklepaugh, of the American steamship Orizaba, which I presented a few days since to the President of the United States, which discloses the fact, that, when he reached the port of San Juan del Norte, the British Government was not only extending its protectorate over the Mosquito territory, but over the port, as well as the river San Juan? Captain Tarlton, in command of the British frigate, sent Captain Tinklepaugh orders, after he had transferred most of his passengers to the river steamer, that they must be put back again upon the steamship, and that they would not be allowed to go up the San Juan. Why? Not because they interfered in any shape or form with the Mosquitoes, whom the British claim that they are bound to protect, but upon the distinct allegation made by him, that these men were, in his opinion, going to aid General Walker in maintaining the existing Government of Nicaragua! Captain Tinklepaugh very foolishly obeyed the order, and then went ashore in search of Captain Tarlton. When he found him he was informed that he (Captain Tarlton) did not choose that North Americans should go up that river, and join Walker's army! Her Majesty did not choose to let Americans settle in Nicaragua! The captain of the Orizaba assured him that four hundred of his passengers had through tickets to San Francisco, and that only fifty of them were destined for Nicaragua. "Well, then," said he, "I will go on board your vessel, look at your papers, and talk with your passengers." This looked very much like the right of search—a question upon which we have offered to fight the world. He went on board the ship—the papers were examined—the passengers were interrogated. Captain Tarlton became satisfied, and told the American captain he could go on up the river. We can navigate the San Juan river, and visit our possessions on the Pacific, provided we satisfy Captain Tarlton that we will not stop in Nicaragua! So it seems, that if this is submitted to, we have at San Juan a British vessel to assist the United States in executing the neutrality laws! On the score of *economy*, perhaps, this would be cheaper than to send two police officers to San Juan, as was done in the case of the Northern Light, to see whether any arms were concealed under the coal-pit! But I hardly think, much as the people love *economy*, that they will carry it to an extreme which involves national dishonor. If we tamely submit to these outrages, we shall soon become a by-word amongst the nations of the earth.

The British Government is afraid that we will annex this territory and make it a portion of our Republic, and this comes from the greatest land-robber in the world, who never did obtain any territory by fair and honorable means. We have extended our territory by *purchase*—England by

robbery—and here is the difference. Her power is now being exercised in Costa Rica and Honduras to expel the North Americans from those States; and here let me say, that at no time have the Americans constituted a majority of the army under the command of General Walker. Nearly two thirds of his whole force are natives of Nicaragua. The small acquisitions of territory which we have heretofore made have excited the jealousy of the British Government, and we have been denounced by her statesmen in the most unqualified terms. In the meanwhile, scarcely a word of complaint has escaped from us against British annexation in the East Indies. In that country, during the last eight years, they have annexed more territory than is covered by all the Central American States, including the Mosquito coast. If Senators would take the trouble to look at it, they will find that the area of the Central American States is generally put down at two hundred thousand square miles, (but I think, in point of fact, it does not exceed one hundred and eighty thousand,) and the British Government has annexed in eight years two hundred and two thousand square miles! We have sent no vessels to the East Indies to prevent a weak and defenseless people from being robbed of their territory, nor have we attempted to arrest England's progress in that direction. Have we not folded our arms and calmly submitted to these acquisitions? On the continent of America, however, we have felt ourselves compelled to resist the grasping policy of that Government. We have said, and I trust we were in earnest, that *these States were not open to the colonization of any European Power*. Because some of our countrymen have gone to these States and sought for themselves new homes, a British fleet is dispatched at once to that coast to see that they do not obtain any foothold there? And this they call a fair execution of the Clayton and Bulwer treaty!

The acquisitions in the East Indies were made under the pretense of protecting the people there. They say they were bound by their treaties to protect them against foreign aggression and internal dissension; they affirm that internal dissension existed to such an extent that they could only give protection by taking the government into their own hands. This is what they call *protection*; and no doubt this is the way in which they intended to extend their protectorate over the Mosquito coast—gradually absorbing all Central America. Who can doubt that Great Britain would extend her dominion over that country as in the East Indies, if it were not that the United States has an eye upon her movements, and has power enough to arrest them?

Here a change has been effected in one of the Central American States; a new Administration has come into power, and during the past half year has given the most satisfactory evidence of its stability, and the President is asked to receive its minister.

The Senator from Kentucky tells us that this is without any precedent. What did you do when the Emperor Bonaparte, on the throne of France, went coolly to work distributing the kingdoms of Europe amongst his relatives? These Governments had been revolutionized by the French army, and still you did not hesitate to recognize their ministers as soon as sent to you.

You recognized that which he established as a *de facto* Government, and did not trouble yourselves about its legitimacy. I say, it has been our uniform practice to recognize in every case the *de facto* Government; and this, then, so far from being without precedent, is in conformity with that established usage. Indeed, I think the President would have been justifiable in recognizing Colonel French, if there had not been personal objections to him. The moral power of our Government ought not to have been thrown against Nicaragua. When a neighboring State is struggling to imitate our example, and establish free institutions, it is entitled to our sympathies, and, as far as possible under the law of nations, to our support; and now, when they have sent to us a minister of unexceptionable character, a native of the country, there was no alternative—the President was bound to receive him. As attacks have been made upon the character of this minister, I may be allowed to say that I received upon yesterday a letter from a gentleman who occupied a high official position in Nicaragua in the years 1851 and 1852, who speaks of this minister as one of the ablest and purest men in that Government—liberal in his principles, and devotedly attached to a republican form of government—a man who has stood by our countrymen in scenes of trial and danger, and who has, nevertheless, retained the love and respect of his own people.

I have no idea, Mr. President, that we are to be involved in a war in consequence of the course which has been pursued. I admit, that upon looking over the whole ground, our difficulties in regard to Central American affairs are fast coming to a head. It may be that the recent movements at San Juan will precipitate a decision between us and Great Britain; and if it is to be settled by an appeal to arms it may be as well adjusted now as at any other time. I am very sure that I would do all that an honorable man dare do to avoid a war with any country. He who has stood upon the battle-field, and seen his friends and comrades stricken down by the balls of the enemy, and their manly forms horribly mutilated, will never speak lightly of involving his country in war. But war, with all its horrors, is far preferable to disgrace or dishonor. I would rather see our glorious emblem, which now so proudly floats over this Capitol, made the winding-sheet of each one of us, than that dishonor should attach to the American name. If, carrying out the great principles which have always characterized our Republic, and repelling the aggressions of British power on this continent, involves us in war, *let it come*. I represent a constituency upon whom will fall the full weight of the first blow that is struck in that war; but, notwithstanding this fact, if a war be necessary to vindicate our national honor, I give but utterance to the patriotic impulses of their hearts when I say, *let it come*. The God of our fathers will go with us to battle, and give us the victory.

"Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just,  
And he but naked though locked up in steel,  
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted."

In such a contest the domestic dissensions and divisions which now exist amongst us would be forgotten, and America would present an undivided front to the enemy.



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